

Qualifications for Preschool Teacher Assistants

A variety of federal and state programs regulate the qualifications required for teaching assistants in preschool programs (assistants are sometimes described as *paraeducators*, *paraprofessionals*, *associates*, *aides*, etc.).

The type of preschool program and required program standards determines the required qualifications for teaching assistants. The table below provides options that are open to teaching assistants for meeting state and federal requirements. The qualification options that teaching assistants in each program may choose in order to meet the requirements of that program are listed in each row. For example, in Shared Visions programs, assistants may carry either a CDA or an associate's degree to meet the qualifications. In Title I programs, assistants may choose up to five options available to them if their district has adopted local assessments.

Qualification Options for Teaching Assistants in Preschool Programs

	Qualification Options					
	CDA	Paraeducator Certificate	Formal Local Assessment	Associate's /Bachelor's Degree	Two Years of College	Effective Date
Program Name						
Shared Visions (NAEYC accreditation required)	Meets requirements	Only meets requirements if a total of 12 hours of college credit	Does not meet requirements	Meets requirements	Meets requirements if a total of 12 hours of credit	September 2006
Title I	Meets requirements (May choose this option if district adopts CDA as a local assessment option)	Meets requirements (Must include generalist and EC certificate)	Meets requirements (CDA assessment may be selected as a local assessment option)	Meets requirements	Meets requirements	January 2006
ECSE	Meets requirements	Meets requirements (Must include generalist and EC certificates)	CDA assessment is the accepted equivalent	Meets requirements	Meets requirements	August 2009
Head Start	Meets requirements	Does not meet requirements	Does not meet requirements	Meets requirements	Meets requirements	January 2013
Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program	Based on the programs standards choose the appropriate Qualifications Options					
• QPPS standards	Meets requirements	Meets requirements (Must include generalist and EC certificates)	CDA assessment is the accepted equivalent	Meets requirements*	Meets requirements*	Within one year of award
• NAEYC standards	Meets requirements	Only meets requirements if a total of 12 hours of college credit	Does not meet requirements	Meets requirements	Meets requirements if a total of 12 hours of credit	Within one year of award
• Head Start standards	Meets requirements	Does not meet requirements	Does not meet requirements	Meets requirements	Meets requirements	Within one year of award

Qualification Descriptions

Child Development Associate (CDA) Training and Assessment

A Child Development Associate is an individual who has successfully completed a CDA assessment and has been awarded the CDA Credential by the Council for Professional Recognition, 2460 16th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20009-3575; (800) 424-4310; <http://www.cdacouncil.org>. The CDA is a recognized part of the child care licensing/registration requirements in Iowa, is a way to earn points on the Quality Rating System, and is a part of the process of achieving some types of accreditation standards.

A Child Development Associate is able to meet the specific needs of children and works with parents and other adults to nurture children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth in a child development framework.

The purpose of the CDA program is to enhance the quality of early care and education by defining, evaluating, and recognizing the competence of child care providers. The successful CDA meets the following competency goals:

1. To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment.
2. To advance physical and intellectual competence.
3. To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance.
4. To establish positive and productive relationships with families.
5. To ensure a well-run, purposeful program responsive to participant needs.
6. To maintain a commitment to professionalism

Title I Requirements for Highly Qualified Paraeducators

- 1) Completed two years of study at an institution of higher education; or
- 2) Obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or
- 3) Met a rigorous standard of quality and be able to demonstrate through a formal state or local academic assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading writing, and mathematics (or, as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness); or
- 4) Obtain voluntary certification through the BOEE

Notes on Title I Requirements

- Under general Title I requirements, the options for two years of college education or associate's degree can be in any major; however, in early childhood programs, earned college credits must include child development, early childhood education, elementary education or early childhood special education. It is not necessary to maintain a current paraeducator certificate.
- The CDA training can be adopted by a district as a local assessment option for #3. Title I allows a district to have more than one local assessment.
- The generalist paraeducator certificate meets Title I requirements; however, in EC programs including the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program and Title I generalist and early childhood certificates are required. It is not necessary to maintain a current paraeducator certificate.

Formal Local Assessment

Agencies who utilize an assessment to meet the Title I highly qualified requirements for paraeducators, should carefully choose an assessment that will measure the knowledge of and ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness). The assessment criterion established for approval as a paraprofessional under Title I must be rigorous and defensible.

For information on Iowa's paraeducator Title I requirements or certification opportunities, contact Marietta Rives, Iowa Department of Education, 515-281-6038 or at Marietta.Rives@iowa.gov.

For information on CDA options and requirements, contact Penny Milburn, Iowa Department of Education, 515-281-7844 or at Penny.Milburn@iowa.gov.

*Note: Teaching assistants with an Bachelor's, Associate of Arts degree or two years of college in fields other than early childhood education must have a staff development plan addressing how early childhood expertise is being provided to guide the curriculum.

Teaching assistants with 12 hours of college credit in early childhood education, child development, or elementary education meet the requirements.